# REF 2021 Open Access policy questions

Revised guidance for the REF was released on 23 July 2018

<http://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/2018/draftguidanceonsubmissions201801.html>

<http://www.ref.ac.uk/media/ref,2021/downloads/Draft%20Guidance%20on%20submissions%20REF%202018_1.pdf>

Policy intent p.32, paragraphs 107 - 116

Policy details p. 66, paragraphs 213 - 245

These are questions collated from the UKCORR community:

1. Can exception 245b be applied to accepted manuscripts deposited in preprint servers?
2. What are the audit requirements for proving that the accepted text is present in a preprint server?
3. Will the current policy continue from 2021 onwards? Are there going to be transition arrangements?
4. What is the distinction between a preprint server and a subject repository?
   1. Preprint server - typically disseminates manuscripts *before* publication?
   2. Subject repository - normally disseminates manuscripts *after* publication?
5. Will Research England build some leeway into its calculation of 3 months after acceptance/publication when it comes to auditing institutions’ submissions, to recognise that there are different interpretations of 3 months (90 days, 3 calendar months etc), and that different systems calculate the period in different ways?
6. Where an institution has evidence that compliance was achieved through deposit in a previous institution’s repository, how can it demonstrate this, bearing in mind that most systems capture a date of deposit (that would suggest non-compliance) that can’t be amended? In this situation, the “Other” exception is the only feasible one. If institutions include an explanatory note indicating where and how compliance was achieved, can this exception be used? Obviously exception 244a (“At the point of acceptance, the staff member to whom the output is attributed was employed at a different UK HEI, and it has not been possible to determine compliance with the criteria.”) doesn’t apply.
   1. Will a submission be penalised in any form if it applies exception 244a to all outputs accepted for publication whilst an author was at another UK HEI? How will this affect any decision around audit of the submission based on frequency of exceptions used?
7. Can we have an official policy or wording clarification on what constitutes Gold OA (rather than a letter, which is now superseded anyway), including specific reuse terms and/or licences.
8. Along the same lines as 6, where an institution can demonstrate compliance through a preprint service (para 228 of the guidance), how will it do so in the submission? This will inevitably require some narrative. Is the “Other” exception with a note confirming that the preprint service holds a version identical to the accepted version, and that it was uploaded before publication, acceptable?
9. There is a discrepancy in deposit exception wording (‘published while a staff member was employed’ vs. ‘at the point of acceptance’) for former staff output eligibility. See paragraphs 114 and 244.a.
10. It seems like there’s a slight discrepancy between para 225 which says there’s no limit on the number of exceptions we can submit to the REF and the previous published FAQs 9.2 and 9.7<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/rsrch/oa/FAQ/#exeptions10> And also the OA policy - para 41<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Pubs/2016/201635/HEFCE2016_35.pdf> which imply that (for certain category of exceptions at least) there shouldn’t be a high number of exceptions.
11. The point 218 refers to not-peer review outputs published in a journal, which could refer to Editorials, Reviews, Comments… In the same paragraph, specifies that these outputs are “articles”. Does it mean that the policy refers only to articles, or other types are also within the scope?
12. Should this document from October 2014 now also be disregarded?: Open access in the post-2014 Research Excellence Framework: information and audit requirements (<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/What,we,do/Research/OA/Open%20access%20in%20the%20next%20REF%20information%20and%20audit%20requirements.pdf>). Formed the basis for REF2021 data collection in most CRIS/ repositories. Also, supported my argument as to why ArXiv couldn’t be used as it didn’t support/ we wouldn’t be able to obtain all the necessary metadata for submission.
13. In Circular Letter 20/2015 (<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Pubs/2015/CL,202015/Print-friendly%20version.pdf>) , point 5 ‘Compliance and Audit’, there is mention of a final deposit date (likely three months ahead of the REF submission date) for deposit to allow for any inadvertently non-compliant deposits to be made compliant. Has this been/is this now scrapped as an idea?